



## **Metro Denver Homeless Initiative Housing Stability Flexible Fund Policies and Procedures 2020**

The Housing Stability Flexible Fund (Flex Fund) is made possible by the strong and consistent support from the Metro Mayors Caucus, The Denver Foundation, and other private donors. Metro Denver Homeless Initiative (MDHI) works with organizations to assist households who are experiencing a housing crisis in the seven-county Metro Denver region. The Flex Fund is designed to remove a financial barrier that prevents a household from obtaining or remaining in permanent housing. This document outlines MDHI's Flex Fund policies and procedures. Other information related to the Flex Fund can be found here: [www.mdhi.org/Flex\\_Fund](http://www.mdhi.org/Flex_Fund).

### **I. Accessing Flex Fund Assistance**

Any organization or provider that partners with OneHome, our community's Coordinated Entry System, or is a member of the Metro Denver Continuum of Care (CoC), can submit a request to MDHI's Flex Fund on behalf of eligible households experiencing a housing crisis in Metro Denver.

The request form is posted on our website: [www.mdhi.org/Flex\\_Fund](http://www.mdhi.org/Flex_Fund). Before submitting a request to Flex Fund, the submitter should attempt to obtain assistance from all other resources in the community. Flex Fund is used when the household would continue to experience homelessness or become literally homeless *but for* this one-time financial assistance. If the household is literally homeless, they must have a lease that is ready to be signed and a unit that is ready for move-in.

There is a limited amount of funds available. Even when all eligibility criteria are met, the request may not be approved.

### **II. Eligible Participants**

Individuals and families experiencing a housing crisis in the seven-county Metro Denver region and who are working with a partnering organization are eligible for

Flex Fund financial assistance. Households must be literally homeless or at-risk of becoming homeless.

Literal homelessness is defined as an individual or family who is residing in an emergency shelter, transitional housing, or place not meant for human habitation such as a bus stop, camping, or vehicle. If a household has moved into housing before the request has been submitted and approved, MDHI will not be able to assist with move-in costs. Providers must request Flex Fund assistance prior to the households anticipated move-in date. The household must be fully approved for housing and unit should be ready for move-in.

Households at-risk of homelessness must have written documentation from their current landlord/property owner stating that they need be out of their housing within 14 days due to non-payment of rent. Please see the following section for guidelines on third-party verifications and other required backup documents. Households that are being evicted for reasons other than non-payment of rent will not be considered.

Eligible households must be able to maintain housing after receiving one-time financial assistance. Households are eligible to receive assistance one time per calendar year.

### **III. Requesting Assistance**

Before filling out the request form, the person submitting the request and the participant should attempt to get assistance from all other resources in the community. Efforts to obtain assistance from other sources must be documented and indicated on the request form. MDHI will not accept or approve a request submitted by a participant/client. The household seeking assistance must be working with a partnering organization to submit and process the request. Providers are prohibited from submitting a request for Flex Fund on behalf of a family member, friend, or colleague.

Providers can submit a request form by clicking on “**REQUEST FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE HERE**” link found at: [www.mdhi.org/Flex\\_Fund](http://www.mdhi.org/Flex_Fund). *Do not include client’s personal identifying information on this form.* Make sure all other information on the form is completed and filled out correctly. The questions on the survey may change over time, therefore, community providers should always go to [www.mdhi.org/Flex\\_Fund](http://www.mdhi.org/Flex_Fund) or reach out to MDHI at [flexfund@mdhi.org](mailto:flexfund@mdhi.org) to obtain the most recent request form.

MDHI will respond to the person submitting the request for assistance within 1-3 business days. If the request is approved, MDHI will send an e-mail to the person who submitted the request, indicating the required documentation to collect and send back before MDHI can process a payment. If the person submitting the request does not get a response within 3 business days or it is an urgent request, meaning the payment is due within 1-2 business days, e-mail [Flexfund@mdhi.org](mailto:Flexfund@mdhi.org) right away upon submitting the form.

MDHI relies on our community providers to also collect and send all back up documentation for assistance. MDHI does not have the capacity to collect the required paperwork, communicate with the vendor (landlord, moving company, utility company, etc.), and/or communicate with the person seeking assistance. The person submitting the request is also responsible for the communication follow-up. If the paperwork is not collected and sent within 10 business days of MDHI's approval, the request form will have to be re-submitted and MDHI can no longer guarantee the assistance.

The same provider cannot submit more than one request at time. The provider who submits the request should be the only person communicating with MDHI about the application for assistance. MDHI strongly recommends that your agency identifies a Flex Fund point of contact who vets cases and determines if applying for assistance is appropriate for the household seeking help. This helps streamline communication and allows MDHI to process payments more efficiently.

MDHI may reach out for additional information about a household to better understand their need for assistance. Again, there is a limited amount of funds available. Even when all eligibility criteria are met, the request may not be approved.

MDHI attempts to ensure that the Flex Fund is available to all our CoC partners across the seven-county metro Denver Region. Each organization is limited to 5 approved Flex Fund requests. Once 5 requests have been approved and processed, we will notify the next submitter that your organization has reached the maximum. Please coordinate within your agency to ensure the most appropriate households are receiving assistance first. If funds are available, we may be able to consider additional requests but there are no guarantees.

#### **IV. Eligible Costs and Backup Documentation**

The Flex Fund can be used for one-time move-in costs, rental assistance, and landlord mitigation. The Flex Fund can cover up to \$3000 per participant, but only if that amount is available and needed. There are several categories of assistance. **If the participant needs Flex Fund financial assistance for something that is not listed**

**as an eligible cost, it must be approved by MDHI before submitting a request form.** Please contact [Flexfund@mdhi.org](mailto:Flexfund@mdhi.org) for preapproval.

All vendors (property owners, moving companies) must complete a W-9 and provide documentation verifying the amounts owed by the household seeking assistance that is dated within the last 30 days. Once backup documentation is collected, send documents encrypted to [FlexFund@mdhi.org](mailto:FlexFund@mdhi.org).

The following describes the eligible Flex Fund costs and the examples of backup documentation to collect and submit to MDHI before a payment is processed.

**Move-in Assistance:**

- **Security Deposit:**
  - Copy of lease showing amount of security deposit; -or-
  - Letter from landlord/property owner stating the household is approved for move-in and includes the prospective residential address, amount of deposit, and tenant’s name
- **First month’s rent:**
  - Copy of residential lease; -or-
  - Letter from landlord/property owner stating the household is approved for move-in and includes the prospective residential address, amount of first month’s rent, and tenant’s name
- **One-time move-in costs:**
  - Quote from moving company to be approved by MDHI, then followed by an invoice;
  - Quote from truck rental company to be approved by MDHI, then followed by an invoice;
  - Other invoices related to move-in costs
- **Rental Arrears – current unit:**
  - Eviction notice or Demand for Compliance and copy of the residential lease; -or-
  - Written notice from landlord/property owner stating that the amount of rent owed and that the household is at-risk of losing their housing within 14 days. See the sample past due notice attached as **Exhibit A** and also posted on [www.mdhi.org/Flex\\_Fund](http://www.mdhi.org/Flex_Fund) Send this along with a copy of the residential lease; -or-
  - Recent rent ledger with written notice from landlord and copy of residential lease
- **Rental Arrears – past unit:**
  - Written notice of rental arrears from property owner/landlord; -or-

- Account balance from collections agency and denial notice from PHA because of rental arrears owed to previous property owner only
  - Rental arrears in collections will only be approved when a household’s application for public housing or housing choice voucher is being denied. Arrears owed must be their only reason for denial.
  - If the collections agency is out of state or the arrears far exceed our assistance cap, we may not be able to approve assistance.
- **Utility Assistance:**
  - **Utility Deposits:** Utility bill in the participant’s name showing amount of utility deposit
  - **Utility Arrears when it impacts a participant’s ability to establish a new service:** Utility bills in participants name showing arrears
- **Pet Deposits or one-time pet fees:** Copy of residential lease including amount of pet fee
- **Relocation to another community when there is a confirmed housing opportunity:** Letter from case worker describing the participant’s permanent housing option available, quote for travel to be approved by MDH, followed by an invoice for travel costs

### Landlord Mitigation

- **Reimbursement to landlords for damages, repairs, or vacancy payments:**
  - **Damages/Repairs:** Invoice including an itemized list of damages and cost of repairs, move-out checklist (if applicable)
  - **Vacancy Payment:** Promissory note form landlord stating that they will or will continue to rent to OneHome program participants if a vacancy payment is provided (must be submitted by landlord/property owner)

## V. Payments

Payments will be made on behalf of the participant and issued to third party vendors such as a utility company, landlord/property owner, moving company, etc. MDHI cannot directly reimburse a participant. MDHI can reimburse a referring agency if the vendor is not willing to wait for the check to be processed. If an agency is seeking a reimbursement, they must provide MDHI with a current copy their agency’s W-9 and proof of the payment transaction (copies of checks, check requests, credit card statement, etc.). **Agencies that do not get prior approval from**

**MDHI will not be reimbursed. All service providers must fill out a request form and get approval before issuing a payment and expecting a reimbursement.**

Unless otherwise determined by the referral source and MDHI, payments will be mailed to the vendor's address indicated on the W-9.

## **VI. Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)**

Agencies who have access to Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS) and submit a Flex Fund request are required to create or update the head of household and all its members' client profiles in HMIS. Agencies should adhere to the policies and procedures described in [Colorado HMIS Statewide Policies and Procedures](#).

MDHI staff will enter a Flex Fund service indicating the amount and type of assistance that the household has received along with other household information from the Flex Fund application:

- Number of persons in household
- Household type
- Current housing status
- Referring agency name
- City and county where the client resided before becoming homeless or
- City and county where they resided when they became at-risk of losing housing

If agencies do *not* have access or use HMIS, the person submitting the Flex Fund application is required to follow the steps below before the household's information can be shared in HMIS:

- Obtain consent from the household seeking assistance to have their information shared in HMIS. Consent can be either verbal or written.
  - Written consent is preferred. Indicate on the application the type of consent that was obtained from the household seeking assistance.
  - The Release of Information (ROI) is linked in the application, and if written consent is possible, the ROI should be uploaded into HMIS.
  - If verbal consent is obtained, the ROI should be read aloud to the household seeking assistance.
- Complete the application posted on MDHI's Flex Fund website. Do not skip any questions. If answers to questions are missing, MDHI will reach out to the person who submitted the application for additional or clarifying information.

If a household refuses to have their information shared in HMIS, MDHI will enter the information to track the service and mark the household as “Private” in the system.